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AUTHOR Melnick, Steven A.; Fiene, Richard  
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## ABSTRACT

The relationships among parents' attitudes about school effectiveness, parent involvement, and student achievement is investigated in this study. The Parent Attitudes Toward School Effectiveness (PATSE) was administered to 4,979 parents of children in grades K4 through 5 in an urban school district, yielding a response rate of 67 percent, or a final sample of 3,328 parents. Iowa achievement test scores of a random sample of 250 children in grades 1-5 were then matched with their parents' survey responses that had been classified according to level of involvement and attitudes about school effectiveness. Findings indicate that involving parents in substantive ways in their children's schooling has a significant impact on parents' attitudes toward the school. A second finding demonstrates a direct relationship between parents' attitudes toward the school and student achievement. Although not a causal relationship, findings demonstrate that increased parent involvement not only contributes to positive school perceptions, but is also related to improved academic performance. Recommendations are made for revision of the survey instrument. A copy of the survey instrument and statistical tables are included. (13 references)  
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# Assessing Parents' Attitudes Toward School Effectiveness

Steven A. Melnick

Richard Fiene

Pennsylvania State University at Harrisburg

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## Assessing Parents' Attitudes Toward School Effectiveness

### Introduction

Research has identified several characteristics that effective schools possess. These include characteristics such as (a) safe and orderly environment, (b) clear school mission, (c) home/school relations, (d) instructional leadership, (e) high expectations, (f) opportunity to learn/time-on-task, and (g) frequent monitoring of student progress (Connecticut State Department of Education). Although different states have identified various characteristics, the seven listed above are representative of the factors thought to be related to school effectiveness.

A crucial factor in a child's schooling is the impact of the parents' attitudes toward school. The home environment has been shown to have a direct influence on increasing affective, behavioral, and cognitive learning (Wahlberg, 1984). The home has a significant impact on motivation, self-concept, and the use of out-of-school time. In addition, some researchers have found that a broad set of parental activities linking school and home are positively correlated with student achievement (Linny & Nernberg, 1983).

Schools with effective parent involvement include parents in the assessment of needs and resources (Burns, 1982). The Parent Attitudes Toward School Effectiveness Survey (PATSE--see Appendix A) contributes to the needs assessment process by determining

parents attitudes on six different scales. The PATSE was selected because of previous research found it to be a reliable and valid instrument (Gable, Murphy, Hall, and Clark, 1986). Information gathered from the PATSE can play a key role in the formulation of staff development plans.

The purpose of this study was to (a) determine if there was any significant difference in parents' attitudes toward school with respect to why and how often they came to the school, (b) determine if there were any significant differences between the student achievement scores of children whose parents indicated high attitudes toward school and the student achievement scores of children whose parents indicated low attitudes toward school, and (c) recommend any necessary revisions for the future use of the Parent Attitudes Toward School Effectiveness Survey.

The following sections will present a review of relevant research, description of the methodology, discussion of the results, and implications for further research.

### Review of Relevant Research

In effective home-school relations "parents understand and support the basic mission of the school and are made to feel that they have an important role in achieving this mission" (Gauthier, Pechione, & Shoemaker, 1985). Several models of parental involvement have been developed to achieve this goal.

One such model, developed at the University of Houston-Clear Lake, involved a collaborative effort between the university and

local school districts (Bermudez and Padron, 1988). Specific objectives of the model included the following:

- (1) Encourage parents to view the program as an opportunity and not a requirement;
- (2) Treat parents as interested members in the education of their children;
- (3) Provide parents with clear expectations of their participation in the program;
- (4) Give parents specific strategies and skills for social and economic survival;
- (5) Praise and recognize parents' participation;
- (6) Provide lectures/materials that do not need much explanation.

By training preservice and practicing teachers to work effectively with minority parents, this model accomplished a dual goal of increasing parental involvement in the local school districts and developing better teacher training and staff development techniques.

In a statewide effort in Tennessee to increase and improve parental involvement in the public schools, a variety of models were used, each tailored to the needs of the individual district. The first phase of the models centered on schools with existing parental involvement programs and sought to improve them. The second phase initiated three models--Active Parenting, New Parents as Teachers, and Operation Fail-Safe--in schools with no parental involvement programs. The models attempted to foster

parental involvement in a broad range of educational concerns: early intervention, public awareness, preschool readiness and enrichment, parenting skills, and raising student achievement levels (Lueder, 1989).

The Accelerated School Project in California, in which parental involvement is regarded as an essential component for improved student achievement, involved all parents in the educational process. The project helped to break down what Seeley (1989) termed the "delegation model," a characteristic of bureaucratized school systems that delegate different tasks to parents and to schools, thus hindering cooperative effort between the two. Seeley found that this comprehensive cooperative program did more to ensure student success because the school was seen as a "community learning center" supported by a cooperative team of teachers and parents.

Although these parental involvement models differ in application and emphasis, they agree that the kind of parental involvement needed in public schools is a working partnership of parents, teachers, and administrators rather than an intensification of separate, traditional parental involvement activities. This team concept is one of seven essential components of strong parental involvement programs identified by Williams and Chavkin (1989). The other six include written policies, administrative support, training of staff and parents, two-way communication, networking with other programs, and evaluation.

With the availability of successful parental involvement models goes the responsibility of determining which model can best meet the needs of a public school district. Districts in urban areas or districts with a large percentage of minority students need to carefully evaluate their requirements and goals before developing or adapting a program for parental involvement. Urban districts may have problems developing an effective parental involvement program because of the special demands placed on single parents, teenaged parents, and parents whose educational experiences have left them with a negative view of the schools (Menacker et al., 1988). In such districts, Menacker believes that two steps--assessing parents' and teachers' attitudes and developing a strategic plan--are necessary prerequisites for implementing a successful parental involvement program.

Other possible obstacles to parental involvement involve the different values and expectations of parents and the schools. Chavkin and Williams (1987) surveyed elementary administrators and parents to determine what each group felt were the most and least useful aspects of parental involvement. They found that the two groups agreed on the usefulness of parental involvement in such matters as amount of homework, special program placement, evaluating student achievement, and planning desegregation; however, they disagreed markedly on the usefulness of parental involvement in discipline methods, selecting materials, hiring and firing teachers, and budgetary priorities.



Another potential source of trouble for parental involvement programs was pointed out by Lindle (1989), who reported that, in addition to greater involvement with their children's education, parents also wanted to feel that they were part of the "team" helping their children to succeed at school. They did not want to be part of a "professional-client" relationship with the school or to be patronized in any way. It would appear, therefore, that the manner in which a parental involvement program is introduced to parents may be as important as the program itself.

Assessing parental attitudes appears to be a necessary first step in involving parents in the schools. Parents' values, responsibilities, and expectations of the schools make it imperative that parental attitudes be assessed prior to the initiation of a parental involvement program to ensure the highest probability of success.

### Methodology

Data Source. All elementary students in grades K4 through 5 in eleven different buildings in an urban school district (n=4,979) were given surveys to take home to their parents. A total of 3,328 surveys were returned, which yielded a 67% return rate. For a parent survey in an urban school district, this return rate was considered very high. A random sample of children in grades 1-5 was drawn and matched with their parents' responses on the Parent Attitudes Toward School Effectiveness

Survey for the student achievement analyses (n=250).

Instrumentation. The survey used in this study was the Parent Attitudes Toward School Effectiveness Survey developed by the Bureau of Educational Research and Service at the University of Connecticut (Gable, Murphy, Hall, & Clark, 1986). The instrument was designed to measure parental attitudes toward six dimensions of school effectiveness: (1) Home/School Relations, (2) Clear School Mission, (3) High Expectations, (4) Safe and Orderly Environment, (5) Instructional Leadership, and (6) Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress. A Spanish version of the instrument was used for parents of Spanish-speaking students in the district's bilingual education classes.

Parents were asked to rate each of the 47 items using a 5-point Likert scale (5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=undecided, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree).

Analyses. Means for each of the six scales were computed by averaging the parents' ratings on each item of the scale (n=3,328). T-tests were computed for each school effectiveness scale to determine if there were any significant differences between the ratings of parents who did visit the school and those who did not visit the school for each of six reasons (i.e., (1) volunteer, (2) attend an athletic event, (3) attend an academic/cultural event, (4) discuss a discipline problem, (5) discuss their child(ren)'s progress, and (6) did not visit the school for any reason).

Parents were asked to indicate how many visits they made to

their child(ren)'s school during the school year. Based upon their responses, parents were separated into 3 groups--Low Visitation (0-1 visits per year), Medium Visitation Group (2-5 visits per year), and High Visitation Group (More than 6 visits per year). A one-way analysis of variance procedure was used to determine if there were any significant differences among the three groups with respect to parents' attitudes toward school effectiveness. In analyses where significant differences were found, the Scheffe' post hoc test was used to determine which groups were significantly different from each other.

A randomly selected sample (n=250) of the 3,328 parent responses were matched via code numbers with their children's student achievement scores on all subtests of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Parent attitude scales means were examined, and parents whose scale means fell into the lowest 25% of the sample were assigned to the Low Attitude Group; parents whose scale means fell into the highest 25% of the sample were assigned to the High Attitude Group. T-tests were then computed to determine if there was any significant difference between the Low Attitude Group and the High Attitude Group with respect to their children's student achievement scores.

## Results

### Demographic

Respondents were requested to provide demographic information regarding sex, race, education level, and the number

of parents living at home. Ninety percent of the respondents were female. The sample was 67% black, 19% white, 11% Hispanic, and 3% other races. The education level of the respondents was as follows: 26% had no high school diploma, 40% had a high school diploma, 18% had 1 year of college or technical school, 10% had 2 years of college or technical school, 4% had a 4-year college degree, and 2% had at least some graduate school. Fifty-three percent of the households had only one parent living at home; forty-seven had two parents living at home. In addition, respondents were asked how many times per year they visited their child(ren)'s school and for what reason(s) were they most likely to visit the school.

#### Reasons for Visiting School

Table 1 displays the results of comparisons between parents who reported they did or did not visit school to (1) volunteer, (2) attend an athletic event, (3) attend an academic/cultural event, (4) discuss a discipline problem, (5) discuss their child(ren)'s progress, and (6) did not visit the school for any reason. For each of the above six categories, scale means are displayed for each group--those that reported they did visit school and those that reported they did not visit. T-tests were computed to determine if there were any significant differences between the two groups.

As can be seen in the last column of Table 1, parents who visited the schools for more positive reasons (i.e., to volunteer, attend an academic/cultural event, and to discuss

Table 1  
Comparisons of Parent Perceptions of Effective  
Schools Characteristics by Reasons for  
Visiting the School  
(n=2,959)

Reason/Scale	Means		t
	Did Not Visit	Did Visit	
<u>To Volunteer</u>			
Home/School Relations	3.57	3.65	-2.28 *
Clear School Mission	3.67	3.68	- .34
High Expectations	3.61	3.64	- .97
Safe & Orderly Environment	3.68	3.71	- .66
Instructional Leadership	3.47	3.57	-2.67 **
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	3.76	3.85	-2.52 *
TOTAL	3.64	3.71	-2.18 *
<u>To Attend an Athletic Event</u>			
Home/School Relations	3.58	3.54	1.18
Clear School Mission	3.68	3.60	2.08 *
High Expectations	3.61	3.60	.30
Safe & Orderly Environment	3.69	3.61	1.93
Instructional Leadership	3.48	3.48	.13
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	3.78	3.74	.95
TOTAL	3.65	3.62	.91
<u>To Attend an Academic/Cultural Event</u>			
Home/School Relations	3.56	3.66	-4.33 ***
Clear School Mission	3.66	3.71	-2.11 *
High Expectations	3.59	3.70	-5.07 ***
Safe & Orderly Environment	3.65	3.78	-5.42 ***
Instructional Leadership	3.46	3.55	-3.37 **
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	3.75	3.84	-3.66 ***
TOTAL	3.62	3.73	-4.69 ***

(continued on next page...)

Table 1 (continued)

Reason/Scale	Means		t
	Did Not Visit	Did Visit	
<u>To Discuss a Discipline Problem</u>			
Home/School Relations	3.60	3.55	2.08 *
Clear School Mission	3.71	3.60	4.84 ***
High Expectations	3.64	3.56	3.76 ***
Safe & Orderly Environment	3.71	3.62	4.30 ***
Instructional Leadership	3.50	3.43	2.90 **
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	3.80	3.72	3.75 ***
TOTAL	3.67	3.60	3.56 ***
<u>To Discuss Child's Progress</u>			
Home/School Relations	3.51	3.60	-3.86 ***
Clear School Mission	3.63	3.68	-2.10 *
High Expectations	3.58	3.62	-1.91
Safe & Orderly Environment	3.64	3.69	-2.00 *
Instructional Leadership	3.48	3.48	- .09
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	3.76	3.79	- .94
TOTAL	3.63	3.65	- .65
<u>Do Not Visit School For Any Reason</u>			
Home/School Relations	3.59	3.27	5.51 ***
Clear School Mission	3.68	3.47	3.52 **
High Expectations	3.62	3.47	2.85 *
Safe & Orderly Environment	3.69	3.43	4.56 ***
Instructional Leadership	3.49	3.29	3.50 **
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	3.78	3.57	3.56 **
TOTAL	3.65	3.46	3.55 **

\*  $p < .05$   
 \*\*  $p < .01$   
 \*\*\*  $p < .001$

their child(ren)'s progress) tended to rate the effectiveness of the school higher. Even where statistical significance was not indicated on the six effective schools scales, the means of parents who visited schools for positive reasons tended to be higher on all scales. Conversely, parents who tended to visit school for more negative reasons (i.e., to discuss discipline problems) or did not visit school for any reason tended to rate the school significantly lower on all scales.

#### Frequency of Visits to School

Table 2 contains the means for each of the three visitation groups for each of the six scales on the instrument, the F-ratio, and the results of the Scheffe' post hoc test. The means for each scale tended to increase as parent visits to the school increased. A significant F-ratio was found for all analyses.

The last column of Table 2 shows that all groups were significantly different from each other for each scale except the Clear School Mission scale. On this scale, the Low Visitation Group was significantly different from the other two, but the Medium and High Visitation Groups were not significantly different from each other.

#### Student Achievement

A randomly selected sample (n=250) of students were matched with their parents' Parent Attitude Toward School scores. For each student selected, Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores were obtained. This resulted in having two types of scores for each student in the sample--student achievement scores and their

**Table 2**  
**Comparison of Parent Perceptions of Effective Schools**  
**Characteristics for Low, Medium, and High Visitation Groups<sup>1</sup>**  
**(n=2,959)**

Scale	Group	Mean	F-ratio	Differences
Home/School Relations	(1) Low	3.45	55.34 *	1 < 2,3 2 < 3
	(2) Medium	3.58		
	(3) High	3.73		
Clear School Mission	(1) Low	3.57	13.61 *	1 < 2,3
	(2) Medium	3.69		
	(3) High	3.73		
High Expectations	(1) Low	3.51	32.14 *	1 < 2,3 2 < 3
	(2) Medium	3.62		
	(3) High	3.71		
Safe & Orderly Environment	(1) Low	3.57	33.76 *	1 < 2,3 2 < 3
	(2) Medium	3.68		
	(3) High	3.81		
Instructional Leadership	(1) Low	3.41	23.44 *	1 < 3 2 < 3
	(2) Medium	3.46		
	(3) High	3.61		
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	(1) Low	3.68	21.91 *	1 < 2,3 2 < 3
	(2) Medium	3.77		
	(3) High	3.87		
TOTAL (All Items)	(1) Low	3.54	35.41 *	1 < 2,3 2 < 3
	(2) Medium	3.64		
	(3) High	3.76		

**Note:** Group Sample Sizes: (1) 793 (2) 1459 (3) 707

$p < .001$

<sup>1</sup>Low Visitation Group= 0 or 1 visits per year  
 Medium Visitation Group= 2 to 5 visits per year  
 High Visitation Group= More than 6 visits per year



parents' Parent Attitude Toward School scores. Parent attitude scales means were examined, and parents whose scale means fell into the lowest 25% of the sample were assigned to the Low Attitude Group (n=52); parents whose scale means fell into the highest 25% of the sample were assigned to the High Attitude Group (n=64). Using normal curve equivalents (NCE's) for the student achievement scores on all 20 sub-tests of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, t-tests were used to determine if there were any significant differences in student achievement between students with parents who had high attitudes toward school effectiveness and students with parents who had low attitudes toward school effectiveness.

As there were 6 PATSE scales and 20 ITBS scores, a total of 120 t-tests were computed. Table 3 presents the results of a comparison of ITBS scores (expressed as NCE's) between children with Low Attitude parents and children with High Attitude parents. Only those comparisons with significant t-values are listed.

In examining Table 3, it is evident that the High Expectations, Safe and Orderly Environment, and Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress scales had the highest number of significant differences with respect to student achievement scores. In the High Expectations and Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress scales, the ITBS scales of Vocabulary, Reading Comprehension, Capitalization, Punctuation, Usage, Visual Material, Reference Material, Word Study Skills Total, Math Concepts, Math Computation, Basic Composite, Complete Composite,

Table 3

Comparison of ITBS Student Achievement Scores (in NCE's)  
Between Children of Parents with High Attitudes Toward School  
Effectiveness and Children of Parents with Low Attitudes Toward  
School Effectiveness

PATSE Scale/ ITBS Scale	Low Attitude (n=52)	High Attitude (n=64)	t
Home/School Relations			
Word Usage	40.70	50.97	2.61*
Clear School Mission			
Math Concepts	35.79	44.69	2.62*
Math Computation	37.09	45.66	2.59*
High Expectations			
Vocabulary	33.48	41.67	2.32*
Reading Comprehension	39.09	48.09	2.73**
Capitalization	40.01	48.13	2.16*
Punctuation	40.21	50.50	2.68**
Word Usage	34.92	46.02	3.21**
Visual Material	38.64	45.98	2.45*
Reference Material	35.80	46.65	3.18**
Word Study Skills	37.44	46.95	3.18**
Math Concepts	35.67	45.93	2.93**
Math Computation	37.64	48.06	2.51*
Basic Composite	33.46	42.40	2.60*
Complete Composite	34.38	42.60	2.54*
Social Studies	39.97	50.61	2.67*
Science	41.63	51.44	2.13*
Safe and Orderly Environment			
Vocabulary	33.02	41.75	2.54*
Reading Comprehension	38.83	47.56	2.75**
Word Usage	36.44	46.08	2.77**
Visual Material	37.77	45.61	2.42*
Reference Material	37.46	47.75	2.05*
Word Study Skills	37.67	45.79	2.46**
Basic Composite	32.47	41.86	2.69**
Complete Composite	32.43	41.58	2.76**

(continued.....)

Table 3 (continued)

PATSE Scale/ ITBS Scale	Low Attitude (n=52)	High Attitude (n=64)	t
<b>Instructional Leadership</b>			
Reading Comprehension	40.52	47.45	2.29*
Reference Material	35.54	44.49	2.58*
Math Concepts	34.20	43.32	2.46*
Complete Composite	34.56	40.98	2.11*
<b>Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress</b>			
Vocabulary	34.44	45.89	2.63*
Reading Comprehension	36.81	50.09	3.36***
Capitalization	36.62	49.08	3.19**
Punctuation	37.38	48.27	2.17*
Word Usage	33.74	48.97	3.86***
Visual Material	33.73	49.23	3.90***
Reference Material	31.37	47.60	4.02***
Word Study Skills	31.86	49.02	4.30***
Math Concepts	32.51	46.81	3.49***
Math Computation	36.38	48.44	2.54*
Math Total	34.40	44.69	2.67**
Basic Composite	31.44	44.54	3.17**
Complete Composite	33.03	44.31	3.59***
Social Studies	38.14	49.64	2.10*
Science	41.43	54.07	2.48*

\*  $p \leq .05$ \*\*  $p \leq .01$ \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

Social Science, and Social Studies were significantly different between children with High Attitude parents, and children with Low Attitude parents. The Safe and Orderly Environment scale had significant differences between children with High and Low Attitude parents on the Vocabulary, Reading Comprehension, Usage, Total Language, Visual Material, Reference Material, Word Study Skills Total, Basic Composite, and Complete Composite ITBS student achievement scales. The Home/School Relations, Clear School Mission, and Instructional Leadership scales had, respectively, only one, two, and four significantly different comparisons.

It should be noted that in all cases, including those that were not statistically significant, the mean for the High Attitude group was higher than the mean for the Low Attitude group. These data indicate that children of parents who are more positive toward school tend to have higher student achievement scores.

The school effectiveness scales that seem to have the greatest relationship to student achievement are the High Expectations and Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress scales. Parents who believe that the school has high expectations of their children and frequently monitor their children's progress have children who tend to be higher achievers.

#### Revisions of Instrument

This section presents the results of the technical analyses of the Parent Attitudes Toward School Effectiveness Survey. Alpha internal consistency reliability addresses the specific question

"To what extent are the responses to the items assigned to each scale internally consistent?" Low levels of reliability would suggest an inadequate sampling of items from the targeted domain of content and thus lead to inaccurate feedback to school district personnel.

Scale-level. The reliability data for each scale are presented in Table 4. The last column of Table 4 indicates that the reliabilities range from .77 (Instructional Leadership) to .46 (High Expectations). Internal consistency reliabilities for an affective measure are considered to be adequate if they are in excess of .70 (Gable, 1986). As can be seen in Table 4, two of the scales, Clear School Mission and High Expectations, fall below .70. The following item-level analysis will discuss how the reliabilities on these two scales in particular could be strengthened.

Item-Level. Table 4 also contains much item-level empirical information pertaining to how effective the items "work" on the questionnaire. Means and standard deviations are presented noting that very high or low means along with low standard deviations would indicate an ineffective item. These items, where most respondents give either very high or very low ratings, may be good for feedback, but they would not correlate well with other items on the scale and thus not contribute to the desired level of scale reliability. The data in Table 4 do not suggest any problems in this area.

The correlation of each item with the scale to which it is

Table 4

Parent Attitudes Toward School Effectiveness Survey  
 Scale Item Analysis and Alpha Internal Consistency  
 Reliability Data  
 (n=2,939)

Scale	Item Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation with Scale	Alpha if Item Deleted	Scale Alpha
Home/School Relations	1	4.08	.96	.42	.74	.76
	6	4.02	.84	.43	.73	
	11	3.43	1.24	.41	.74	
	13	3.53	1.03	.49	.72	
	16	3.51	.92	.34	.74	
	18	3.56	.92	.50	.73	
	23	3.22	1.15	.36	.74	
	28	3.82	.85	.50	.73	
	31	3.44	1.01	.39	.74	
	34	3.92	.87	.44	.73	
	38	2.81	1.01	.21	.76	
Clear School Mission	10	3.80	.99	.33	.51	.57
	21	3.81	.87	.48	.42	
	25	3.33	.95	.09	.64	
	35	3.73	.89	.41	.46	
	47	3.68	.88	.37	.49	
High Expectations	4	3.38	1.09	.21	.43	.46
	20	3.79	.95	.31	.37	
	24	3.96	.86	.38	.34	
	26	3.64	.91	.22	.42	
	29	3.53	.97	.28	.38	
	36	3.52	1.04	.03	.53	
Safe & Orderly Environment	2	3.66	.93	.46	.68	.72
	5	3.53	.97	.44	.69	
	9	4.03	1.03	.40	.70	
	17	3.71	.88	.36	.70	
	30	4.00	.99	.48	.69	
	32	3.58	.88	.39	.70	
	33	3.25	1.02	.33	.71	
	41	3.70	.97	.44	.69	

(continued....)

Table 4 (continued)

Scale	Item Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation with Scale	Alpha if Item Deleted	Scale Alpha
Instructional Leadership	7	3.42	.98	.54	.73	.77
	12	3.59	.97	.36	.76	
	19	3.67	.91	.43	.75	
	27	3.42	.85	.54	.73	
	37	3.18	.92	.49	.74	
	42	3.39	.94	.61	.71	
	46	3.71	.89	.44	.75	
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	3	3.77	.85	.39	.70	.72
	8	3.81	.85	.46	.69	
	14	3.84	.97	.48	.68	
	15	3.52	1.02	.21	.74	
	22	3.73	.77	.46	.69	
	40	3.98	.99	.43	.69	
	43	3.55	.90	.50	.68	
	45	3.98	.99	.44	.69	

assigned and the scale alpha reliability if the item is deleted from the scale are two important sources of information in Table 4. An item that correlates poorly with its scale will not contribute well to the overall reliability of the scale. The data in Table 4 were examined so that items could be identified for deletion or review/revision in future editions of the questionnaire. On the basis of these data, along with other data presented in Table 4, the following recommendations are offered:

- o Given the acceptable levels of reliability on the Home/School Relations, Safe & Orderly Environment, Instructional Leadership, and Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress scales, no additional items were necessary. The Clear School Mission and High Expectations scales are in need of additional items to raise the reliability levels.
- o Based upon the correlations of the items with their respective scale and the reliability levels if the items were deleted, three items should be deleted from the scale. The deletion of Item 25 from the Clear School Mission scale would raise the scale level alpha from .57 to .64. The deletion of Item 36 from the High Expectations scale would raise the scale level alpha from .46 to .53. Note that in both cases, the items have low correlations with the scale.
- o Based upon the correlations of items with their respective scales, the items on the High Expectations scale are not highly inter-correlated (.03 to .38). Even with the deletion of Item 36 as suggested above, the scale alpha would still be less than desired. Hence, all items on this scale should be reviewed. In addition, items 38 (Home/School Relations) and 15 (Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress) should be targeted for review and possible revision. While in both cases the scale alpha is slightly improved if the item is deleted, review and revision of the item may be more appropriate.



### Summary

This study identified some important indicators of parents' attitudes toward school effectiveness as evidenced by responses on the Parent Attitudes Toward School Effectiveness Questionnaire. In addition, some recommendations for future use of the instrument were provided.

It is clear that involving parents in substantive ways in their child(ren)'s schooling has a significant impact on the parents' attitudes toward school. Parents who visited their child(ren)'s school for positive reasons were more likely to feel that the school was doing a better job. Parents who tended to visit school only to discuss a discipline problem or who did not visit school at all tended to rate the school lower.

This study also determined that a relationship between parents' attitudes toward school effectiveness and student achievement exists. The achievement scores of children who had parents that had high attitudes toward school effectiveness were higher than the achievement scores of children who had parents with low attitudes toward school effectiveness.

Involving parents in substantive ways may result in more positive attitudes toward the school on the part of the parents. While a causal link is not implied by these data, it is apparent that parental involvement is related to increased student achievement. It is evident that when parents and schools work closely together, the children benefit.

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## Appendix A

### Parent Attitudes Toward School Effectiveness Questionnaire

# PARENT ATTITUDES TOWARD SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to learn more about the school your child (children) currently attend(s). Your experiences and attitudes are, therefore, very important. Please assist us by responding to the following statements according to the directions provided. There are no right or wrong answers. In order to ensure confidentiality, please do not write your name on the questionnaire.

## Part I

**INSTRUCTIONS:** PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY WRITING A NUMBER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED.

1. Approximately how many times do you visit your child's (children's) school in a year? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Approximately how many of these visits took place during school hours? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Approximately how many of these visits took place after school and/or evening hours? \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY PLACING AN X IN THE SPACE PROVIDED. PLEASE SELECT ONE ANSWER ONLY.

4. What is the reason you would most likely visit your child's (children's) school?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ to volunteer
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ to watch an athletic event
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ to observe an academic or cultural event
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ to discuss a discipline problem
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ to discuss my child's progress
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_ I don't visit the school for any reason
  - g. \_\_\_\_\_ Other reasons (explain briefly)
5. When you visit your child's (children's) school for any reason, approximately how long is your visit?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ less than 1 hour
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ 1-3 hours
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ 3-5 hours
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ more than 5 hours
6. What is your level of education?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ did not complete high school
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ completed high school
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ completed 1 year of college or technical training
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ completed 2 years of college or technical training
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ completed 4 years of college
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_ beyond 4 years of college
7. What is your sex?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ male
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ female
8. How many children are living at home?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ one
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ two
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ three
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ four
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ more than four
9. How many parents are living at home?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ one
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ two

## Part II

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please read each of the following statements carefully and indicate the extent to which you either agree or disagree with each one by circling the appropriate letters. The response categories are:

SA = Strongly agree

A = Agree

U = Undecided (you neither agree nor disagree)

D = Disagree

SD = Strongly Disagree

For example, consider the following statement:

The school building is not clean.

**(SD)** D U A SA

By circling SD, you have indicated that you strongly disagree with this statement. Again, there are no right or wrong answers. Thank you for your help and please remember to respond to all statements.

\*\*\*\*\*

- |   |    |   |   |   |    |
|---|----|---|---|---|----|
| 1. Teachers in this school use either phone calls, newsletters, regular notes or parent conferences in addition to report cards to communicate my child's progress to me. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 2. Staff and students view this school as a safe and secure place.  | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 3. This school uses student achievement tests to keep track of students' progress.  | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 4. Most teachers in this school do <u>not</u> hold students to high standards of performance in their school work.  | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 5. The atmosphere in this school is business-like and professional.   | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 6. The school is open to parents' suggestions and involvement.  | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 7. The principal leads frequent discussions about instruction and achievement with parents and students.  | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 8. Teachers use many different methods (including samples of students' work and tests) to assess student progress.  | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 9. The school building is generally <u>unpleasant</u> , <u>unkempt</u> , and <u>uncomfortable</u> .   | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 10. Instructional materials (such as paper, textbooks, etc.) are provided to students when needed.  | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 11. Teachers do <u>not</u> contact parents regularly to discuss student progress.   | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 12. It is difficult to make appointments with the principal to discuss instructional issues.  | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 13. Most of the teachers communicate regularly with parents.  | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 14. Teachers in this school are quick to identify problems which students are having in reading, writing or math.   | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 15. There is <u>no</u> system for assessing student learning on a regular basis in my child's (children's) courses.   | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 16. There is an active parent/school group in which many parents are involved.  | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 17. There are written statements describing codes of conduct for students in this school.   | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 18. Teachers seek ideas and suggestions from parents.   | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 19. The principal is <u>not</u> available to discuss matters concerning instruction.  | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 20. All students are praised for their accomplishments, not just those who accomplish the most.   | SD | D | U | A | SA |

21. The general goals of this school are very clear.	SD	D	U	A	SA
22. Students are given standardized tests on a regular basis.	SD	D	U	A	SA
23. I know very little about the policies, academic programs, and activities of the school.	SD	D	U	A	SA
24. Teachers try to help all students achieve.	SD	D	U	A	SA
25. Important decisions made in this school do <u>not</u> reflect the general goals of the school.	SD	D	U	A	SA
26. Students are expected to master subject matter at each grade level.	SD	D	U	A	SA
27. There is strong leadership about instructional issues (such as curriculum topics, improving teaching, etc.) from the principal in this school.	SD	D	U	A	SA
28. In general, the staff is frank and open with parents and students.	SD	D	U	A	SA
29. Most of the students in this school can be expected to complete high school.	SD	D	U	A	SA
30. Students and teachers are <u>not</u> proud of their school, <u>nor</u> do they help to keep it attractive.	SD	D	U	A	SA
31. It is difficult for parents to contribute to important decisions made at this school.	SD	D	U	A	SA
32. The atmosphere in this school is student-oriented.	SD	D	U	A	SA
33. Generally, discipline is <u>not</u> a problem in this school.	SD	D	U	A	SA
34. It is easy to make appointments to meet with teachers.	SD	D	U	A	SA
35. Teachers in this school feel responsible for student achievement.	SD	D	U	A	SA
36. Students do well in this school without having to work hard.	SD	D	U	A	SA
37. The principal regularly brings instructional issues (such as curriculum topics, improving teaching, etc.) to parents for discussion.	SD	D	U	A	SA
38. Very few parents visit the school.	SD	D	U	A	SA
39. Students in this school are challenged to their capacity.	SD	D	U	A	SA
40. Homework is assigned on a regular basis by my child's (children's) teachers.	SD	D	U	A	SA
41. Rules in this school are <u>not</u> clear or consistent.	SD	D	U	A	SA
42. The principal communicates the mission of the school to parents.	SD	D	U	A	SA
43. Feedback on assignments is given to students regularly.	SD	D	U	A	SA
44. Teachers in this school do <u>not</u> hold consistently high expectations for my child (children).	SD	D	U	A	SA
45. Teachers send classwork home for me to look at on a regular basis.	SD	D	U	A	SA
46. The principal is often seen at school activities.	SD	D	U	A	SA
47. School facilities are appropriate for the types of programs provided.	SD	D	U	A	SA

THANK YOU FOR RETURNING ME

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